

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

12 October 2016

Dear Mr. Alston,

Thank you for your letter dated 5 October 2016, on the cholera epidemic in Haiti. I appreciate your commitment to the issue and your positive words on the new approach of the United Nations to the epidemic.

In our view, the legal position of the United Nations does not constrain the Secretary-General's new approach to the issue of cholera in Haiti. Nor is it correct to see our approach as an act of charity. It is based on a sense of responsibility to assist the people of Haiti and on an acknowledgement of the shortcomings of the Organization's own involvement in the past.

I hope that you recognize this, as well as the positive outcomes expected from the new approach, notably the significant impact on those who have been affected by cholera.

As you know, the first track of the approach consists of intensified efforts to respond to and reduce the incidence of cholera in Haiti. These efforts have been greatly affected by the recent hurricane that has devastated Haiti. This latest tragedy has strengthened our resolve to reduce, and ultimately end, the transmission of cholera, improve access to care and treatment and address the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems in Haiti.

The second track of the new approach is the development of a proposal for a package of material assistance and support to Haitians most directly affected by cholera. As we pursue these two tracks, I can assure you that we are reflecting and taking action on the lessons of the tragedy of cholera in Haiti and doing everything we can, as an organization, to ensure it is not repeated.

Mr. Philip Alston
Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty
and human rights
Geneva

Due to the hurricane, we have had to change some of the timelines of our work. The country should be given time to get back on its feet before we proceed with consulting Haitian stakeholders on the proposed support package. We intend to pursue this process with considerable care, to ensure that it is transparent and inclusive. In the meantime, consultations with experts are under way in order to benefit from their expertise in developing the package.

The main constraints we face in carrying out the new approach are financial and political. Without the support of Member States, we will not succeed. We are making every effort to engage Member States and raise funds and support for both tracks. This, too, has been complicated by the hurricane as our organizational resources are, understandably, focused on emergency humanitarian response.

In the coming days, the Secretary-General will visit Haiti, as an act of solidarity and support to the Haitian people. He is then committed to presenting a proposal to the General Assembly before he leaves office. He hopes that Member States will agree to support and implement this proposal.

The people of Haiti deserve tangible expressions of our responsibility, support and solidarity. The United Nations is determined to seize this opportunity to address a tragedy that has negatively affected its reputation and global mission.

I count on your support now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Eliasson